

App. Serial No.: 10/029,475
Atty. Docket No.: 0004-019

REMARKS

These remarks are in response to the Final Office Action dated June 15, 2004, which has a shortened statutory period for response set to expire September 15, 2004. No extension of time is required.

Claims

Claims 1-39 are pending in the above-identified application. Claims 24-28 are withdrawn pursuant to a previous restriction/election requirement. Claims 1-3, 8, 13, 15-17, 21, 23, and 29-39 are rejected over prior art and Claims 4-5, 7, 9-10, 14, and 18-20 are objected to. Claims 6, 11-12, and 22 are allowed. Claims 4-5, 9, 14, 15, 18, 21, and 35 are amended and Claims 1-3, 8, 13, 16-17, and 24-39 are canceled. Allowance of the application is requested.

Examiner Interview Summary

A telephone interview was held between Examiner James Hansen and Applicant's attorney, Larry E. Henneman, Jr. on July 29, 2004. The primary point of discussion was the distinction between the terms "flexible" and "elastic." The Examiner indicated that he would not alter his interpretation of the phrase "elastically coupled," nor would he be inclined to enter an amendment to the specification to clearly define "elastically coupled."

Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 112

Claims 36-39 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph. Claims 36-39 are canceled herein, thereby obviating the 35 U.S.C. § 112 rejections of those claims. Therefore, Applicant respectfully requests withdrawal of the rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 112.

Indicated Allowable Subject Matter

Applicant appreciates the Examiner's indication that Claims 6, 11-12, and 22 are allowed, and that Claims 4-5, 7, 9-10, 14, and 18-20 are objected to, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all the limitations of their respective base claims and any intervening claims. Accordingly, Claims 4 and 5 are amended to include the limitations of Claim 1 and any intervening claims. Claim 7 depends from Claim 5 and remains unchanged. Claim 9 is amended to include the limitations of Claims 1 and 8. Claim 10 depends from Claim

App. Serial No.: 10/029,475
Atty. Docket No.: 0004-019

9 and remains unchanged. Claim 14 is amended to include the limitations of Claims 1 and 13. Claim 18 is amended to include the limitations of Claims 16 and 17. Claims 19 and 20 depend either directly or indirectly from Claim 18, and remain unchanged. Finally, Claims 15 and 21 are amended to depend from amended Claim 14. Claim 23 depends from Claim 21 and remains unchanged. Because, Claim 14 is indicated to contain allowable subject matter, Applicant believes that Claims 15 and 21 are allowable, because they now contain all the limitations of Claim 14.

For the above reasons, Applicant believes that Claims 4-7, 9-12, 14-15, 18-23, and 35 to be in condition for allowance.

Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 102

Claims 1-3, 8, 13, 15-17, 21, 23, and 29-39 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102 (b) as being anticipated by Moore et al. (USPN 5,683,030).

Claims 1-3, 8, 13, 16-17, and 29-39 are canceled herein, thereby obviating the rejections of those claims. As stated above, Claims 15, 21, and 23 now depend directly or indirectly from Claim 14, which is indicated to contain allowable subject matter. Therefore, Applicant believes that the rejections of Claims 15, 21, and 23 are also obviated.


It should be noted that the amendments made herein are intended to expedite the allowance of the present application, and are believed to obviate the rejections of Claims 1-3, 8, 13, 15-17, 21, 23, and 29-39. Therefore, the rejections of Claims 1-3, 8, 13, 15-17, 21, 23, and 29-39 are not discussed herein in detail. However, Applicant does not acquiesce in the propriety of the rejections of those claims. Indeed, Applicant believes Claims 1-3, 8, 13, 15-17, 21, 23, and 29-39 each contain inventive subject matter in their own right and are allowable over the prior art of record for at least the reasons set forth in Applicant's previous response.

For the foregoing reasons, Applicant believes Claims 4-7, 9-12, 14-15, 18-23, and 35 are in condition for allowance. Should the Examiner undertake any action other than allowance of Claims 4-7, 9-12, 14-15, and 18-23, or if the Examiner has any questions or suggestions for expediting the prosecution of this application, the Examiner is requested to contact Applicant's attorney at (269) 279-8820.

App. Serial No.: 10/029,475
Atty. Docket No.: 0004-019

Respectfully submitted,

Date: 7/29/04


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CERTIFICATE OF FACSIMILE TRANSMISSION (37 CFR 1.8(a))

I hereby certify that this paper (along with any referred to as being attached or enclosed) is being transmitted via facsimile, on the date shown below, to: MS: AF, Commissioner for Patents, P.O. Box 1450, Alexandria, VA 22313-1450, at (703) 872-9306.

Date: 7/29/04


Larry E. Henneman, Jr.